By Association *Only*.

Ecommerce in 2027:

Perspectives on what comes next





Ecommerce in 2027

By Association Only brings together voices from across the industry to explore how brands will be discovered, build desire and grow customer relationships in the year ahead.

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The conversations around ecommerce in 2027 often begin with AI. Where will customers discover products? Who, or what, will make the purchase? And what happens to a brand's website when more of the decision has already been made elsewhere?

For fashion, luxury and lifestyle brands, these questions reach beyond technology. They concern how a brand expresses itself, how it earns trust and how it gives customers a reason to return. They also invite a closer look at what growth means, from the metrics teams report to the value a product retains after its first sale.

We asked our agency experts, clients and partners to share the changes they expect to shape the year ahead. Across their perspectives, a common challenge emerges: as more of commerce becomes automated, brands will need to be more deliberate about the experiences, information and relationships they create.

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"As more of commerce becomes automated, brands will need to be more deliberate about the experiences, information and relationships they create."

"Who, or what, will make the purchase?"

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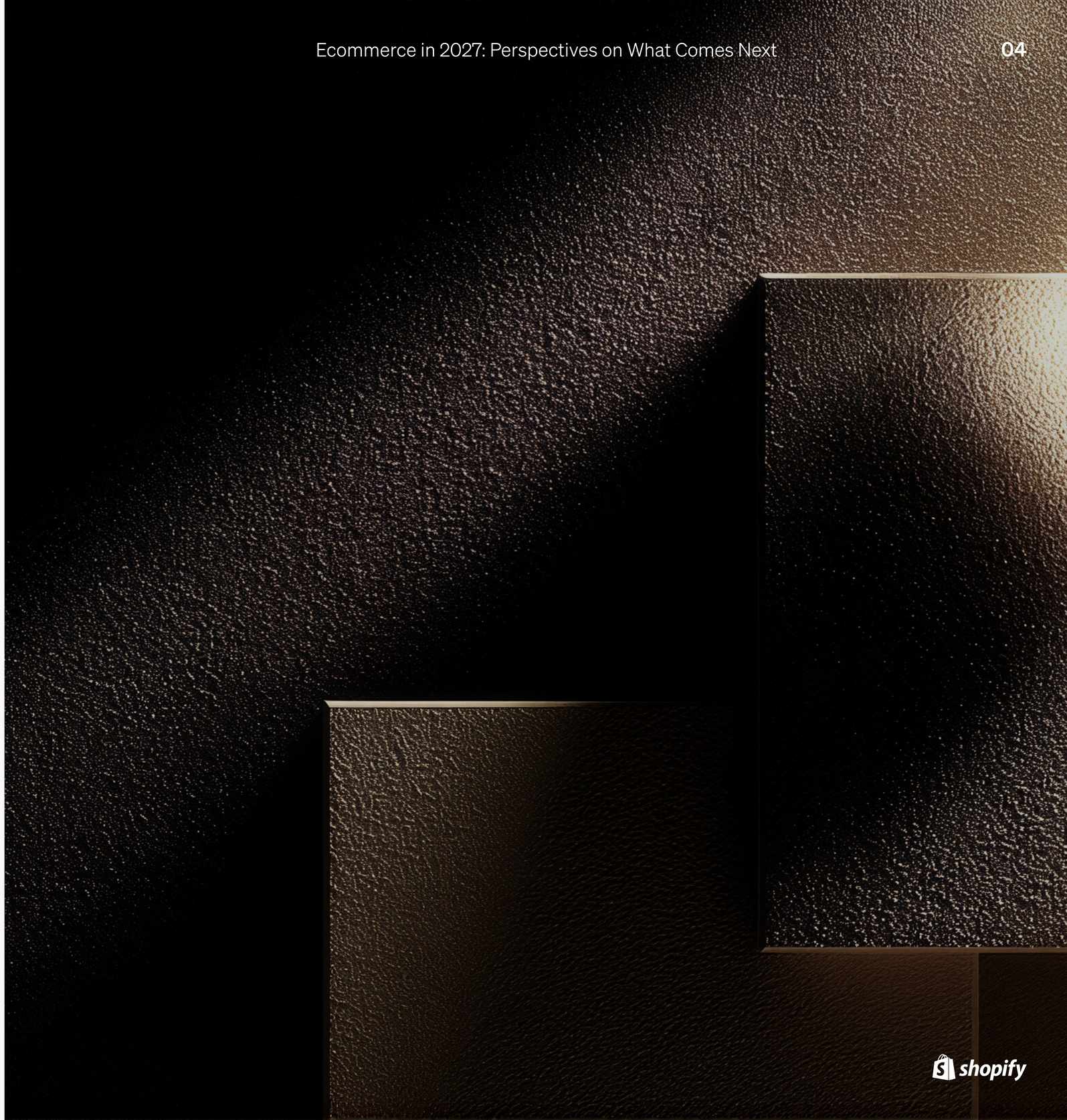
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Clients & partners



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Discovery moves beyond the website



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Lorna McKenzie-Syvertsen

Head of Digital Product & Experience, Db Journey

“Websites will still play a really important role, but their focus may shift more towards purchase validation and conversion.”

The traditional ecommerce journey gives the website a central role: customers arrive, explore a collection, compare products and decide what to buy.

Several of our contributors expect that sequence to become less familiar. Social platforms and AI assistants may take on more of the discovery and consideration process, bringing customers to a brand’s website with a clearer idea of what they want.

For **Lorna McKenzie-Syvertsen, Head of Digital Product & Experience at Db Journey**, this changes the role of the site within a wider customer journey.

“I think the traditional ecommerce journey is changing. We’re moving away from website-led product discovery towards more discovery and consideration happening elsewhere, through AI, social media and other channels.”

“My hypothesis is that consumers will increasingly arrive on brand websites further along in their buying journey, with a clearer idea of what they want. Websites will still play a really important role, but their focus may shift more towards purchase validation and conversion, rather than being the starting point for product discovery.”

“Essentially, I think the biggest change will be a more fragmented customer journey, where brands need to understand the role of different touchpoints and meet consumers wherever they are in their decision-making process.”

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This has implications for where teams invest their time and resources. If discovery takes place across several channels, the website cannot carry the entire responsibility for introducing the brand and explaining its products.

As Lorna puts it:

"I think one of the biggest opportunities, which perhaps isn't getting enough attention, is how brands rethink their teams, channel strategies and where they invest their resources to reflect this changing customer journey."

"Traditionally, we've focused heavily on optimising websites for product discovery and conversion. But now we also need to think about how we make our products discoverable beyond our own channels, ensuring our content, product information and technical infrastructure are set up for AI engines to understand and recommend our products."

"At the same time, we can't lose sight of the website experience, particularly when it comes to building trust, providing the right product information and giving customers the confidence to purchase."

The product page becomes a first impression

When customers arrive directly on a product page, they may bypass much of the storytelling traditionally found on the homepage or within collection pages. The product detail page must then introduce the brand while helping the customer make a decision.

Pat Gaunt, Development Director at By Association Only, sees this as an important shift in how these pages should be designed.

"For many visitors, the PDP is now their first contact with the brand, but is typically built for the end of the funnel. The PDP now has to do double duty, working both as a landing page that highlights the brand and as a product details page. It should introduce the brand and give proof such as reviews, and it should offer routes into related products and collections."

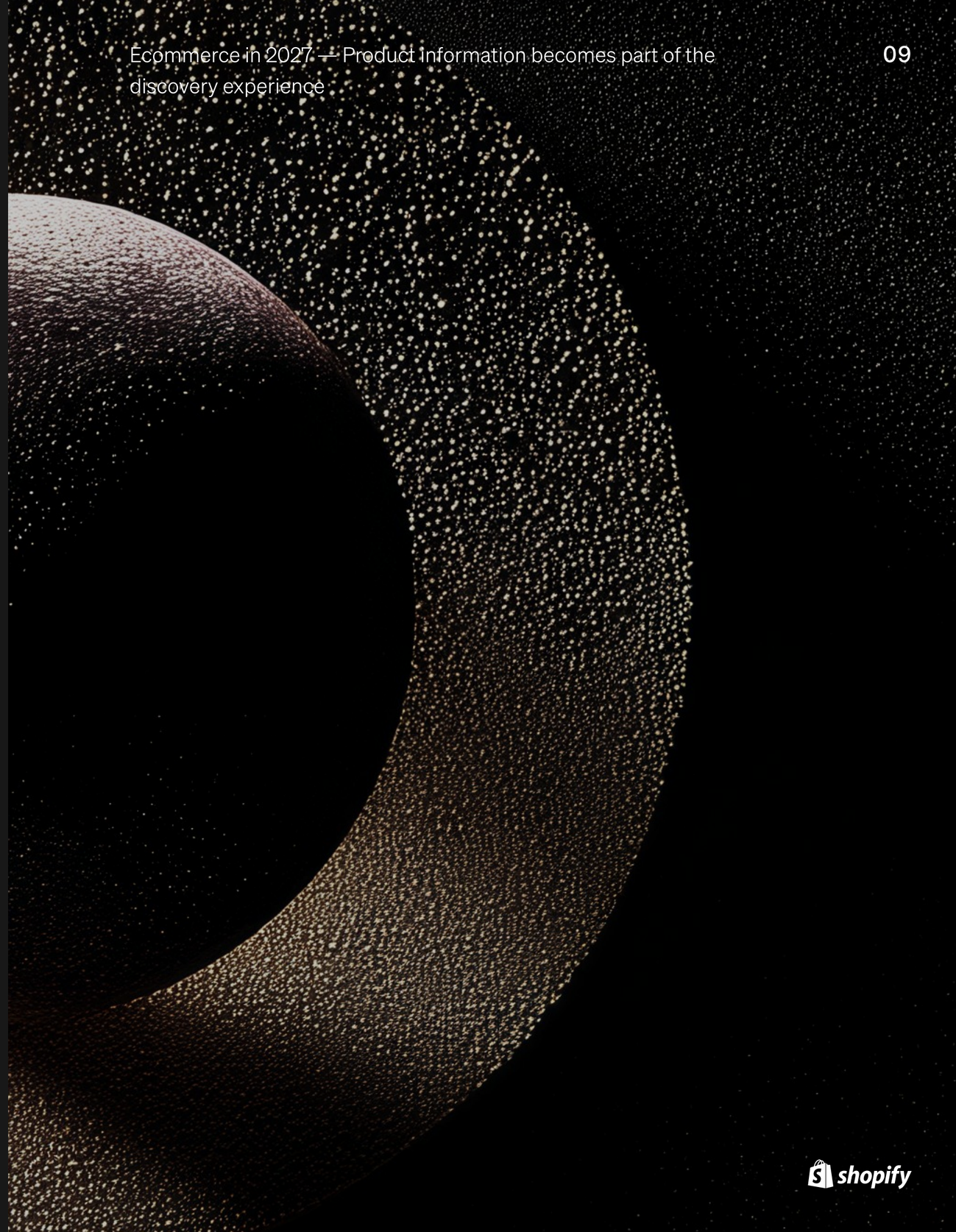
That additional responsibility requires careful balance. A customer seeking reassurance about a brand and a customer ready to purchase may arrive on the same page.

"Brand content should therefore sit alongside the product information and buy button rather than push them down the page. Clear, structured product data matters too, so AI assistants can find and recommend the product in the first place."

The opportunity is to make each product page a convincing introduction in its own right: clear about the item, confident in its expression of the brand and easy to buy from.

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Product information becomes part of the discovery experience



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Kerry Mullin

Head of Marketing, By Association Only

> “The brands that pull ahead will treat their product data with the same care they give their photography.”

As discovery changes, the information beneath the experience becomes more significant.

Photography, art direction and design communicate with customers. Product attributes, variant structures and feeds help other systems understand what a brand sells. Our contributors expect both to demand greater attention in 2027.

Kerry Mullin, Head of Marketing at By Association Only, predicts a closer relationship between product data and visibility.

“In 2027, I predict that AI assistants will stop just recommending products and start shopping on people’s behalf.”

“They won’t experience a site the way a customer does – they read the data underneath it. Clean variant structures, complete product attributes, accurate structured data and consistent feeds become what decides whether a brand gets picked.”

“For luxury brands, minimalist, on-brand product pages are still the right call for the customer. They need to be matched with a strong technical undercurrent, though: rich data that tells machines everything the page leaves unsaid.”

“The brands that pull ahead will treat their product data with the same care they give their photography, so the experience stays beautiful, and the brand stays visible.”

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Robin Marchant, VP Marketing, EMEA at Klaviyo, also expects product information to influence which brands enter a customer's consideration set.

"More shoppers will start by asking an AI assistant what to buy, and it won't hand them ten links to scroll through. It might name three brands."

"To make that shortlist, an assistant has to understand what you sell, and it works that out from your product data: titles, sizes, prices, availability, return terms. In 2027, your product data is your shop window."

Luxury brands start answering more questions

This also brings a renewed purpose to useful content. Customers want to understand fit, materials, care and the differences between products. Those answers can express a brand's expertise while helping customers feel confident about their purchase.

For Kerry, this is an opportunity to bring more of the service associated with physical retail into the digital experience.

"Luxury brands have traditionally said very little on-site and let the product speak for itself. In 2027, that silence may become a gap – shoppers are asking AI assistants detailed questions before they buy: how does this fit, what's it made of, how do I care for it, is it worth the price, what's the difference between these two styles? Assistants answer with whatever information they can find, and if the brand hasn't provided it, someone else's answer fills the space."

"The brands that succeed will publish genuinely useful content in their own voice: sizing and fit guidance, material and care information, and the expertise their store staff share with customers every day."

"Done well, this doesn't dilute the brand. It brings the in-store experience online, where both customers and AI assistants can find it."

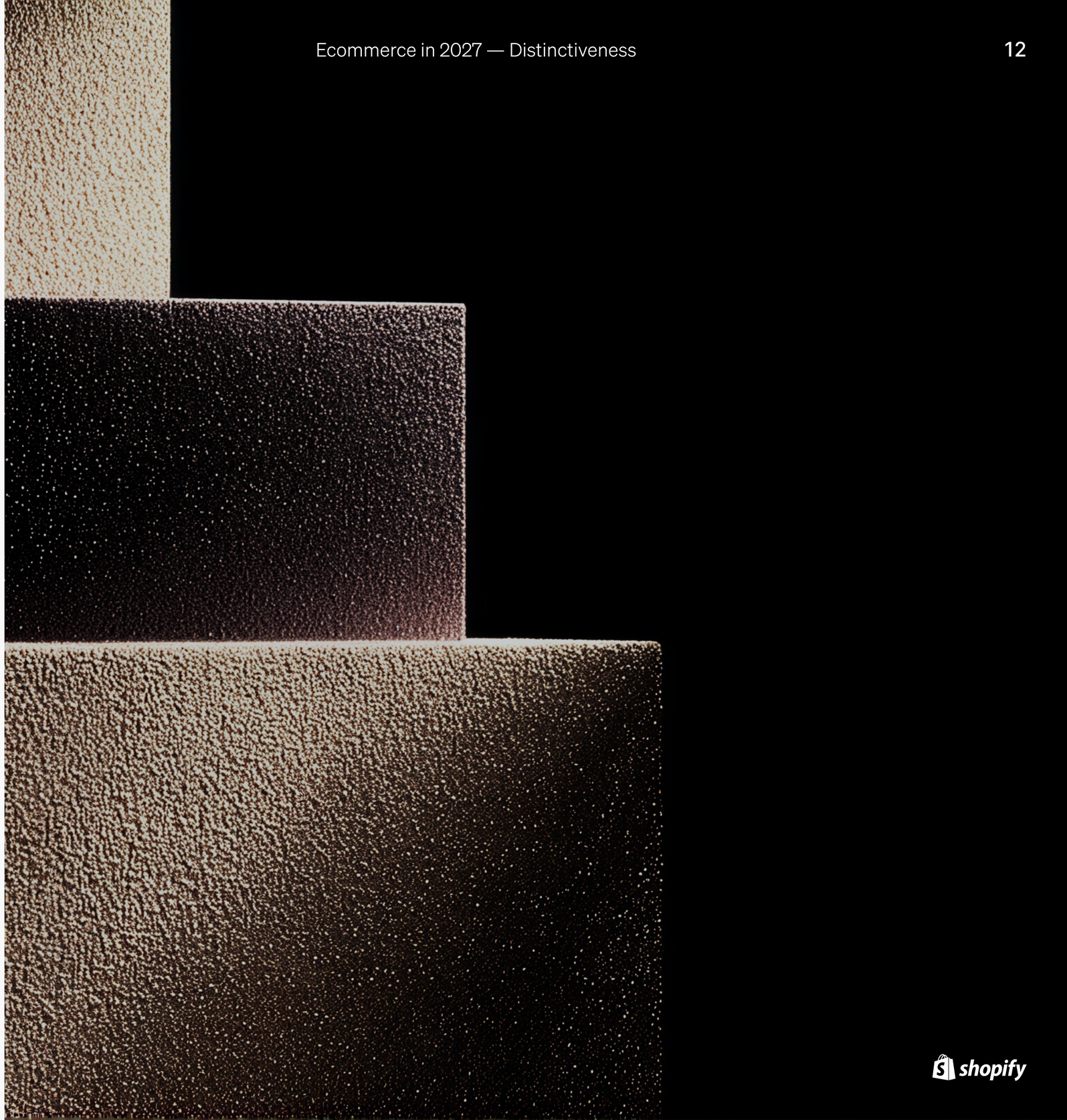
The challenge for design and content teams is to make that knowledge accessible while preserving the clarity and restraint of the brand experience.

"In 2027, your product data is your shop window."

Robin Marchant, Klaviyo

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Distinctiveness becomes more valuable



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Trevor Hardy

CMO, Orlebar Brown

“Technology will make relevance increasingly easy to achieve. Distinctiveness will be much harder.”

Alongside the focus on data and automation, our contributors see a growing role for creative conviction.

If technology makes it easier to deliver relevant recommendations and effortless transactions, brands will need to consider what makes their experience desirable, recognisable and memorable.

For **Trevor Hardy, CMO at Orlebar Brown**, that begins with personality.

“My prediction for 2027 is that personality will become more valuable than personalisation.”

“I think we’ll need to challenge the assumption that the more personalised something becomes, the more desirable it is. AI is giving us tools to tailor almost every interaction to every individual. Are we in danger of creating a world of perfectly personalised mediocrity, where every brand tells us exactly what it thinks we want to hear?”

“The world’s most desirable brands haven’t become successful by responding to consumer preferences. They’ve succeeded by having a distinctive point of view, creating something unexpected and sometimes showing people what they didn’t know they wanted.”

“Technology will make relevance increasingly easy to achieve. Distinctiveness will be much harder.”

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It is a useful challenge for brands considering how far to personalise their experiences. Understanding a customer can improve service and relevance, but a brand also needs the confidence to introduce something unexpected.

Design creates moments worth remembering

Joe Trippett, Founder and Creative Director at By Association Only, expects this to place greater emphasis on the emotional qualities of the ecommerce experience.

“As ecommerce becomes increasingly frictionless, luxury brands are focusing more on what can’t be easily replicated, and that’s emotion.”

“I think that means creating more moments within the experience. A striking first impression, an unexpected piece of storytelling, a beautiful product reveal, a detail that communicates craftsmanship, or a reason to explore beyond the obvious.”

“These moments aren’t decoration or friction for its own sake. They’re deliberate points in the journey that make the brand feel distinctive, give the product meaning and create an emotional response. The role of design is to choreograph those moments while making everything around them feel effortless.”

“When technology levels the playing field of buying ease, the brands that stand out will be the ones that make wanting something memorable.”

Brands become their own curators

That same intention can shape how a brand presents its collections, offers styling inspiration and communicates its wider world.

Robbie Scorer, Head of Strategic Operations at By Association Only, sees an opportunity for brands to take greater ownership of that context.

“In 2027, I predict luxury brands will put far more emphasis on telling their own stories. As more brands compete for the same customers, a great product is no longer enough. Customers buy into what a brand stands for and how it makes them feel.”

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“For years, multi-brand retailers shaped that perception for them. A buyer’s edit gave products context and told customers why they mattered. As brands shift investment into their own direct-to-consumer channels, the opportunity is to bring that personality and point of view in-house. Too many luxury sites still work like product catalogues rather than expressions of what makes the brand distinctive.”

“The brands that stand out will use their own channels to do more than sell, using stronger editorial, considered merchandising, styling inspiration and a more personal experience. That builds a clearer identity and gives customers a reason to come back.”

Together, these perspectives suggest a more expressive role for ecommerce: an experience that helps customers understand both the product and the point of view behind it.

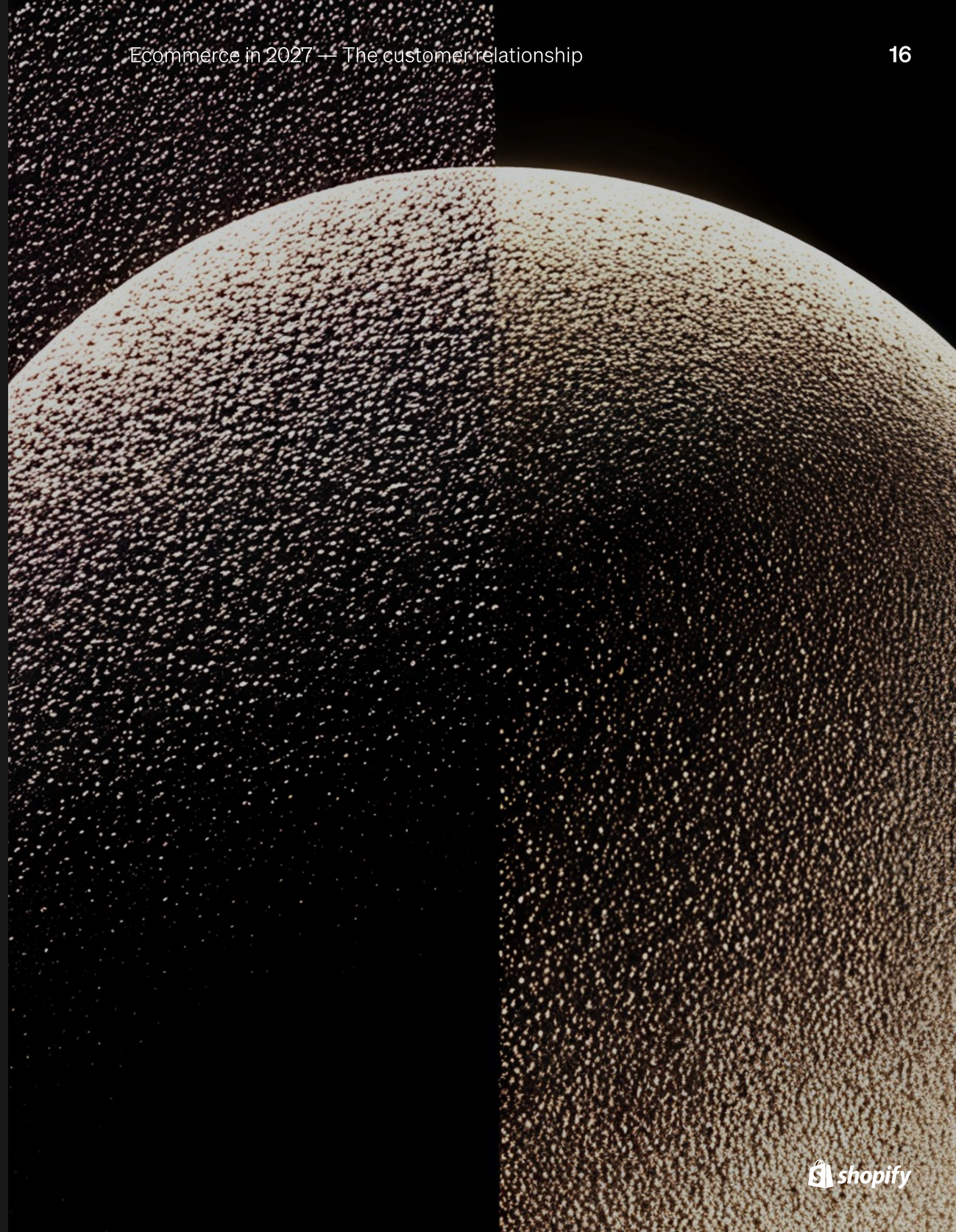
“Too many luxury sites still work like product catalogues rather than expressions of what makes the brand distinctive.”

“When technology levels the playing field of buying ease, the brands that stand out will be the ones that make wanting something memorable.”

Joe Trippett, Founder and Creative Director, By Association Only

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The customer relationship demands greater attention



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Nick Hurst

Head of Product, By Association Only

“Converting the visitor won’t be enough. Brands need to turn them into a relationship they own.”

If more of the journey happens beyond a brand’s own channels, the moments of direct contact become particularly valuable.

A purchase creates an opportunity to begin a longer relationship. What follows – service, communication, recognition and reasons to return – will determine whether that relationship develops.

Nick Hurst, Head of Product at By Association Only, believes brands should prepare for that shift now.

“Shopping is already moving into AI assistants, and in 2027 I foresee that shift will gather pace. Ecommerce traffic won’t collapse overnight… but more of the research, comparison and shortlisting that used to happen across several site visits will happen somewhere else. As that grows, traffic will soften and conversion rates will creep up, because the customers who do arrive have mostly already decided.”

“That sounds like good news, but it hides a risk. If discovery moves off-site, the brand only meets its customer at the moment of purchase. You lose the browsing, the inspiration and the moments where people fall for a brand, not just a product.”

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"That's why 2027 matters. It's the window to prepare before the shift becomes the norm. Converting the visitor won't be enough. Brands need to turn them into a relationship they own: an account, a membership, clienteling, a reason to come back directly next time."

"The brands that utilise next year won't be chasing traffic. They'll be building a customer base that comes straight back, without needing an assistant to find them a second time."

For **Natalia Howard, Head of Ecommerce Strategy at By Association Only**, retention will become central to resilient growth.

"In 2027, customer retention will be the primary growth driver for resilient ecommerce brands. While others may rely on aggressive performance marketing, market leaders are focusing on building valuable, long-term customer relationships centred on lifetime value."

"Mastering this shift requires optimising every touchpoint across the entire post-purchase experience. Value exchange loyalty programmes help capture rich zero-party data, tailored post-purchase journeys drive crucial second purchases, and personalised web experiences ensure returning buyers see a storefront tailored to them."

"Knowing your customer this deeply is both the ultimate buffer against rising ad costs and the foundation of profitable growth."

Lorna McKenzie-Syvertsen sees a complementary role for CRM as brands reconsider the purpose of each channel.

"Social media may play a bigger role in product consideration, while CRM could become increasingly important for brand storytelling, communicating our values and nurturing the relationships we've already built. It's about giving customers reasons to stay connected with the brand and keep coming back."

"Ultimately, I think the opportunity is in being much more intentional about the role each channel plays, rather than trying to achieve everything through the website."

There is a balance to strike here: using customer knowledge to make the experience more relevant while retaining the personality that made the brand attractive in the first place.

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Value extends beyond the first sale



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Lauren Coatsworth

Head of Merchant Strategy, By Association Only

“In 2027, the value of an ecommerce experience may therefore increasingly lie not just in what it persuades a customer to buy today, but in the value it helps that customer retain tomorrow.”

The purchase is also the beginning of a product’s life with its owner. Care, repair, resale and returns all influence the value of that purchase, for both the customer and the brand.

Two of our contributors expect these considerations to play a more prominent role in ecommerce strategy.

Resale value becomes part of the proposition

Lauren Coatsworth, Head of Merchant Strategy at By Association Only, expects resale potential to become a stronger consideration at the point of purchase.

She sees an opportunity for brands to make longevity more tangible. As customers scrutinise premium prices, craftsmanship, durability and the ability to retain value can strengthen the reasons to invest.

This could change what brands communicate on their product pages. Alongside materials and construction, customers may increasingly find information about care, repair, authentication, trade-in and resale services.

Integrated trade-in programmes and certified pre-owned offerings could also create a more connected journey between buying, owning and selling. For luxury brands, this extends the expression of craftsmanship and heritage into the ongoing ownership experience.

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Return speed becomes a commercial priority

For **Liam Young, Founder at Harper Concierge**, protecting value also means looking more closely at how quickly returned stock becomes available to sell again.

“A big theme we’re seeing across retailers for 2027 is improving full price sell-through, or discounting less. Returns have an outsized effect on this. Items are often returned more than once before they sell, and every trip can push them past their full price window.”

“Return rate is the metric retailers obsess over, but it is notoriously stubborn. Most of the gains come from product, and even then they’re usually percentage points.”

“What most brands overlook is the other side of it: return speed. It matters just as much when it comes to getting stock back on sale inside the full price window, and it is far easier to influence. Yet most brands couldn’t tell you theirs.”

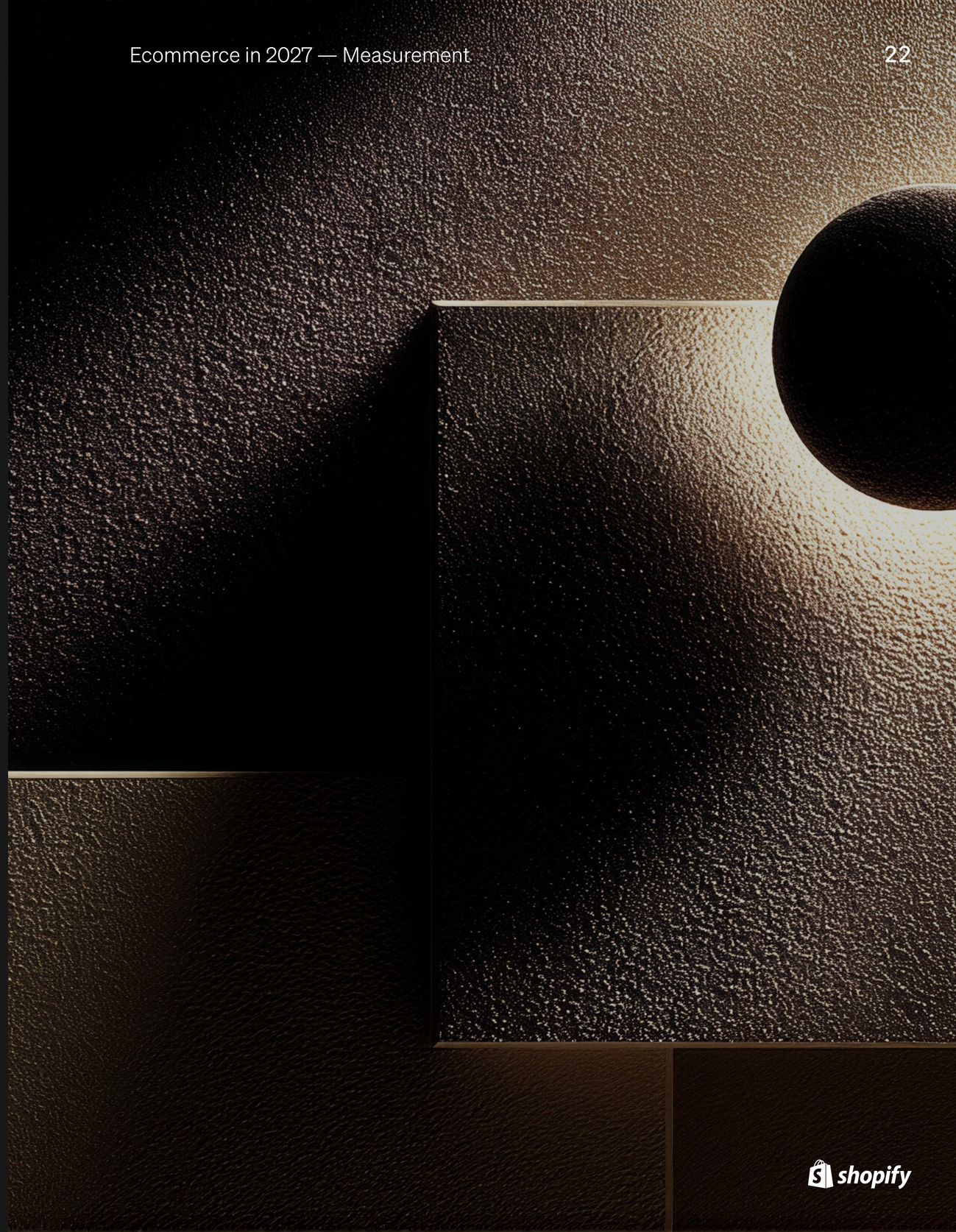
Tracking that interval gives teams another way to examine the commercial impact of returns, from customer communication through to warehouse processing.

“Return speed should be a tracked metric for any brand focused on full-price sell-through. Once it is measured, it can be moved: through return windows, returns communication, warehouse turnaround, and Try at Home services like Harper, which get returns back in the warehouse within a week.”

Both perspectives broaden the conversation about value. They ask brands to consider what happens after checkout and how those experiences support customer confidence, product longevity and commercial performance.

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Growth needs a more considered measurement framework



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George Linton

Strategic Director, By Association Only

“Expect a lot of brands to find their ‘conversion problem’ was really a measurement problem.”

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A changing customer journey also changes how performance should be interpreted.

If customers complete more research elsewhere, a website visit may represent a different level of intent. At the same time, differences in tracking, consent and automated traffic can make familiar metrics harder to compare.

George Linton, Strategic Director at By Association Only, predicts that conversion rate will face greater scrutiny.

“In 2027, I predict that conversion rate will stop being the number ecommerce teams trust most.”

His concern centres on the sessions beneath the calculation: how they are defined, which visitors are visible and how bot and AI-agent traffic affects the picture.

“The brands that do well will stop asking ‘what’s our CVR?’ and ask ‘how much value do we create from each real human visit?’ They’ll build one measurement standard their agency, their tools and their board all agree on. Expect a lot of brands to find their ‘conversion problem’ was really a measurement problem.”

Lorna McKenzie-Syvertsen similarly cautions against treating website traffic growth as a complete indicator of ecommerce health.

“We shouldn’t assume that growing website traffic is always a key indicator of ecommerce growth.”

“If more product discovery and consideration happens elsewhere, we could start to see slower website traffic growth but higher conversion rates, as customers arrive with stronger purchase intent.”

“I think this will make it increasingly important for brands to evolve how they measure performance and where they focus their efforts. Traditional ecommerce metrics will still matter, but we may need to place greater importance on other indicators, like how discoverable and recommended our products are across AI platforms.”

AI needs a shared view of success

Measurement becomes more consequential when AI systems begin acting on it.

Henrik Hoffman Kraft, Co-founder at DEMA, expects alignment between teams and their agents to become an important operational challenge.

“For years the big problem in ecommerce was data silos. Merchandising looked at sell-through, marketing looked at spend, and nobody looked at returns.”

“In 2027, the problem is agent silos. Every team is getting its own AI agents, and each one is very good at optimising its own number.”

“Before, a misaligned business walked in circles. Now it’s like everyone jumping into a car and driving 100 km an hour in different directions. The brands that win will give their agents one shared view of customers, sell-through, profit, etc., not twenty versions of the truth.”

His prediction highlights the importance of shared definitions and objectives. Faster decisions are valuable when teams agree on what those decisions should achieve.

Henrik also sees an opportunity to build a more useful record of what has influenced performance.

“Ask most brands why sales spiked last May and nobody knows. Influencer pushes, PR placements and store events take most of a team’s time, but they’re almost never measured.”

“AI agents can change that, but only inside a harness that connects sales, stock, spend and returns, uses one definition of profit, and tags every initiative to the products it should move. Then agents can tell you what worked before you plan the next peak. The edge goes to brands whose agents remember.”

The ambition is a business that can connect its activity with its outcomes, learn from previous decisions and give both people and technology a clearer basis for the next one.

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Looking ahead



Image placeholder: closing editorial image

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Can customers find and understand the product wherever they begin their journey? Does the experience communicate a recognisable point of view? And does it give them a compelling reason to come back?

Across these contributions, the priorities for 2027 are closely connected.

Product information supports discovery and purchase confidence, distinctive design and editorial give customers a reason to care, thoughtful service and communication help a first purchase develop into a lasting relationship, care, resale and better returns processes extend the value of the product, while shared measurement helps teams understand the effect of their decisions.

The pace and shape of these changes will differ between brands. But the questions they raise are already useful.

For the world’s most design-conscious brands, 2027 offers an opportunity to bring greater precision to the foundations of ecommerce while giving greater attention to the qualities that make a brand worth choosing.

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By Association Only works with luxury and premium brands to build ecommerce experiences that are found, understood and worth coming back to.

If you are planning for 2027, we would welcome a conversation about what these shifts mean for your brand.

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